

Preparation of the Defense

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During the preparation of the defense, time management is a critical task. Often, units receive the order to transition to the defense and, before they realize it, the available time slips away and their companies and platoons rush to prepare their positions. Time management seriously affects the success of the unit conducting the operation.

There are three things commanders can do to make effective use of the time available:

- Occupy the defense as early as possible.
- Follow a methodical *planning priority of work* during concept development.
- Integrate the *preparation priority of work* into the time schedule.

Early occupation is critical because the soldiers must have enough time to effectively execute the preparation priority of work. The commander's first step in early occupation is to define what tasks his subordinate units must accomplish before they can report that they have occupied the defense. Depending on which manual is used as a reference, this task is not well defined in doctrine. As a minimum, the unit should establish security and communications, reconnoiter the defensive sector or battle position, and position crew-served weapons and assign sectors of fire to complete occupation. The commander may also want to have final protective fires (FPFs) planned, hasty positions prepared, or critical obstacles emplaced before reporting occupation. He should establish these tasks in the unit standing operating procedures (SOPs).

The next step is to determine when his units must occupy the defense in

order to have enough time to complete the *preparation priority of work* before the *defend by time*. Many units miss this step. They are lulled into a sense of security in the tactical decision making process using the one-third/two-thirds rule by focusing on the *defend NLT* (not later than) time. It appears that they have plenty of time to plan, move, and prepare logically and sequentially. The commander has several options in determining the *occupation NLT* time (Figure 1).

First, in analyzing the factors of METT-T (mission, enemy, terrain, troops, and time), the commander can determine how long he thinks it will take his unit—on the basis of its training level, the terrain, and other factors of mission analysis—to be prepared to defend by the NLT time. For instance, in a typical 72-hour defense planning time schedule, he might estimate that he needs 36 hours. He then subtracts this amount of time from the time available and uses the one-third/two-thirds rule to develop his planning schedule for the time remaining before he must report he has occupied the position.

A second way is to take one-third of the time available—24 hours in this case—to establish the occupation time (D-24) and then use the one-third/two-thirds rule on the time available before the occupation time to establish his planning time line. He could also use the one-fifth/four-fifths rule in the defense instead. The amount of daylight remaining is also a key consideration in establishing the occupation time, since it is difficult to reconnoiter and position weapons and obstacles in the dark.

In the normal one-third/two-thirds technique, a unit often fritters away the

available time and leaves very little for preparation. When it is clear that time is critical, the unit has to rush to occupy the defense immediately after the company order. The brigade and battalion staffs begin to pressure the companies to move into position, receive handover of obstacles, identify Class IV and V logistical release points, position forces to counter divisional and regimental reconnaissance, submit and adjust FPF grids, backbrief, rehearse, and so on. As a result, the company commander's focus quickly dissipates. Company, platoon, and squad level troop leading procedures suffer. Reconnaissance, force protection, and weapon positioning are poor. Obstacles are not integrated with the company scheme of maneuver. Engineer equipment lies idle. Coordination suffers. Force protection takes a back seat to position preparation. Units focus on positions with overhead cover and sector sketches instead of on reconnaissance and security (R&S) patrols, local security, protection of engineer assets in their sector, passive air defense, camouflage and concealment, or protective obstacles.

The obvious advantages of the three options are that they allow the soldiers and junior leaders 36, 24, and 21 hours, respectively, to prepare the defense. These techniques also increase the time available to emplace tactical obstacles and get leaders on the defensible terrain to confirm the tentative plan, coordinate obstacle positioning and handoff, backbrief on the ground, receive Class IV and V, etc. The disadvantage is the reduced planning time at battalion and brigade level, but this is not necessarily bad news. It may be better to give subordinates a hasty plan and get them on

the terrain to confirm and refine that plan through reconnaissance and the backbrief and rehearsal process. Moving units early into the planned defensive sector or battle position provides security for continued reconnaissance in that area as well.

The early occupation of the defense can help solve numerous problems in executing the *preparation priorities of work* before the *defend by time*. But early occupation without a focus is not enough. The unit develops that focus through a methodical approach to the planning process, which should start as soon as the unit receives a warning order. The critical steps between the mission analysis and a solid concept are to determine avenues of approach, identify engagement areas, position antiarmor weapons and tactical obstacles to support the engagement areas, position infantry with protective obstacles oriented against dismounted avenues of approach, likely dismount points and overwatching tactical obstacles, and then integrate fire support, command and control, intelligence, combat service support, and air defense to support the scheme of maneuver. This methodical approach is essentially a *planning priority of work* for concept development.

The order in which the commander and staff apply this model depends, to a great extent, on the unit's assigned task and purpose. Since the defense seeks to wrest the initiative from the attacker, the first step must be to analyze the enemy's avenues of approach and how he will use them. If the unit's task and purpose focus on the enemy—delay, disrupt, or attrit the enemy—the second step should be to determine where it can best kill the enemy and designate an engagement area. Following this, they should position antiarmor weapons to kill the enemy in the engagement area and then position obstacles to fix or disrupt him. But if the focus is on the terrain—retain terrain, turn, block, or channel the enemy—the second step must be to position tactical obstacles to block or turn the enemy and then determine engagement areas and antiarmor weapon positions that overwatch and protect those obstacles.

72-HOUR DEFENSE PLANNING TIME SCHEDULE				
EVENT	NORMAL TO DEFEND TIME	OPTION 1 COMMANDER ESTIMATE	OPTION 2 1/3 OF TIME FOR PREPARATION	OPTION 3 1/5-4/5 RULE
DIVISION ORDER	D-72	D-72	D-72	D-72
BDE TLP	24 HRS	12 HRS	16 HRS	14 HRS
BRIGADE ORDER	D-48	D-60	3-56	D-58
BN TLP	16 HRS	8 HRS	11 HRS	11 HRS
BATTALION ORDER	D-32	D-52	D-45	D-47
CO TLP	10 HRS	5 HRS	7 HRS	9 HRS
COMPANY ORDER	D-22	D-47	D-38	D-38
PLT TLP	7 HRS	4 HRS	5 HRS	7 HRS
PLATOON ORDER	D-15	D-43	D-33	D-31
SQD TLP	5 HRS	2 HRS	3 HRS	6 HRS
SQD ORDER	D-10	D-41	D-30	D-25
MOVE TO/RECON	ASAP	5 HRS	6 HRS	5 HRS
OCCUPY POSITIONS	ASAP	D-36	D-24	D-21
PREPARE	<10 HRS	36 HRS	24 HRS	21 HRS
DEFEND NLT TIME	D-HR			

Figure 1

STAFF PLANNING PRIORITY OF WORK		
TASK	RETAIN/BLOCK/CANALIZE	DELAY/DESTROY/ATTRIT
OBSTACLE INTENT	BLOCK/TURN	FIX/DISRUPT
Step 1	DETERMINE AVENUES OF APPROACH	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Go/Slow Go/No Go Terrain - Mobility corridors - Situation template 	
Step 2	POSITION TACTICAL OBSTACLES	DETERMINE ENGAGEMENT AREAS
Step 3	DETERMINE ENGAGEMENT AREAS (to protect obstacles)	POSITION ANTITANK WEAPONS
Step 4	POSITION ANTITANK WEAPONS	POSITION TACTICAL OBSTACLES (to support engagement areas)
Step 5	POSITION INFANTRY	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Determine dismounted avenues of approach to obstacles and AT weapons - Determine possible dismounted assault positions - Determine possible mounted dismount points - Determine dismounted engagement areas - Position crew-served weapons - Position protective obstacles to support dismounted engagement areas - Position squads to protect crew-served weapons and obstacles 	
Step 6	INTEGRATE THE FIRE SUPPORT PLAN	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tactical obstacles - Infantry positions - Engagement areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Engagement areas - Tactical obstacles - Infantry positions
Step 7	INTEGRATE COMMAND, CONTROL, COMMUNICATIONS, AND INTELLIGENCE	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Decision support template - Reconnaissance and security plan - Synchronization matrices - Engagement priorities 	
Step 8	INTEGRATE AIR DEFENSE AND COMBAT SERVICE SUPPORT	

Figure 2

In both instances, the third step is to position infantry to protect the antiarmor weapons and obstacles. Then the staff must integrate the plans for fire support, intelligence collection, and command and control to support the

scheme of maneuver. In this step, the staff must focus the unit's combat multipliers against the biggest threat at the decisive point. In the enemy-focused task and purpose, these plans focus assets to detect, deliver, assess, and direct

DEFENSE PREPARATION PRIORITY OF WORK (Based on FM 7-10)	
TERRAIN ORIENTED	ENEMY ORIENTED
ESTABLISH R&S OPERATIONS	
Security and Communications	
Site tactical obstacles	Position AT weapons
Position AT weapons	Position crew-served weapons
Position crew-served weapons	Site tactical obstacles
Assign Sectors of Fire	
Position Other Assets	
Designate FPLs/FPFs	
Emplace critical tactical obstacles	Clear fields of fire
Clear fields of fire	Emplace critical tactical obstacles
Prepare Range Cards	
OCCUPATION TIME (BEFORE DIVISION RECON IF POSSIBLE)	
Prepare Hasty Fighting Positions	
Emplace tactical obstacles	Direct fire control measures
- Blocking	Adjust indirect fires
- Turning	Emplace tactical obstacles
- Fixing	- Blocking
- Disrupting	- Fixing
- Direct fire control measures	- Turning
- Adjust indirect fires	- Disrupting
Prepare armpit deep fighting positions	
Designate alternate/supplementary positions	
Establish wire communications	
Emplace protective obstacles	
Overhead cover and camouflage	
RAG WITHIN RANGE OF DEFENSIVE POSITIONS	
Recon routes to alternate/supplementary positions	
Prepare hasty alternate/supplementary positions	
Rehearse contingencies	
Establish sleep/rest plan	
DEFEND NLT TIME	
Stockpile ammunition, food, and water	
Dig trenches between positions	
Alternate/supplementary positions prepared	
REGIMENTAL RECON	
Go to MOPP 2	
ENEMY CHEMICAL ATTACK	
R&S possible enemy dismounted avenues of approach	
DISMOUNTED INFILTRATION	
R&S possible enemy assault positions	
ENEMY PREP FIRES DISMOUNTED ATTACK	
R&S possible enemy mounted avenues	
Local counterattack	
MOUNTED ATTACK	
Support counterattack	

Figure 3

combat power against mounted forces in the engagement area and, secondarily, to protect the killers from the dismounted threat. In the terrain-oriented focus, the unit focuses these assets to prevent the breach of obstacles. The primary focus is on the threats that can unhinge the obstacle plan, dismounted infantry and engineer equipment, and then secondarily to reduce the enemy's mounted forces enough to convince the

enemy to go where the commander wants him to go. The final steps are to integrate combat service support and air defense plans with the scheme of maneuver (see Figure 2).

The final method of saving time in the defense is to integrate the preparation priority of work into the unit time schedule. The commander must look at the time between occupation and the defend NLT time. The actual priority of

task accomplishment will vary with anticipated enemy actions. If the enemy's regimental artillery group (RAG) is within range and air parity exists, overhead cover and MOPP-2 are more important than if the RAG will not be in range for 24 hours and the unit has air superiority. The level of preparation needed is based on the way the commander visualizes the battle. For instance, if he believes that most of his units will have to occupy alternate or supplementary positions before the enemy arrives in force, then he may choose to have hasty positions in alternate and supplementary positions instead of simply requiring reconned routes to designated positions using natural cover only.

Once the commander determines these two things, the staff must allocate time to accomplish these critical tasks and establish NLT times within the preparation priority of work for each of them. These times should be established in relation to the enemy's anticipated actions. This will allow the staff to track the preparation of the defense and recommend to the commander when to shift assets if a segment of the defense is not prepared in a timely manner. Figure 3 shows an example, using a timeline at company level to achieve this reallocation of assets.

The defense is extremely difficult to execute because of the enormous number of tasks that must be done in preparation. Without a detailed schedule for planning and preparation, either in the unit SOP or as a result of mission analysis, no unit can effectively prepare the defense to achieve the commander's intent. These three suggestions can help a unit manage its time. To improve time management, commanders and staffs need only to adapt these models to the conditions of their unit's particular defensive operation.

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